

Understanding Anxiety



Key points to remember:

- Anxiety is normal. Everyone experiences anxiety from time to time
- Anxiety becomes a problem when it interferes with your daily functioning or stops you from doing things you would like to do.
- Both biological and environmental factors may contribute to development of anxiety.

What is anxiety?

Everyone experiences anxiety from time to time. It's normal to feel a little bit anxious in high pressure situations such as a job interview, public speaking, or when you're experiencing change in your life or work environment. Anxiety also helps us to avoid dangerous situations. It is normal to feel anxious in dangerous situations and this will trigger our 'fight' or 'flight' response.

Sometimes our worries become persistent and are out of proportion to the reality of the threat. When this happens anxiety is usually beginning to interfere with your daily functioning and it stops you from doing things you

would like to do. If this happens you may have an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety can be described as feeling scared or worried a lot of the time. Sometimes you might not even know why you feel this way. People often use words such as 'nervous' or 'stressed'.

What causes anxiety?

In Australia, anxiety is the most common mental health condition. Research suggests approximately up to 30% of woman and 20% of men will experience anxiety at some point in their lives.

There are many reasons that may contribute to you developing anxiety.

These include biological factors such as a family history of anxiety; personality traits and brain chemistry.

Environmental factors such as a traumatic experience or long-term stress, feeling uncertain about the future and limited support may also increase your risk of developing anxiety. Often, anxiety develops as a result of a combination of these factors.

What are anxiety disorders?

Anxiety disorders are a combination of psychological and physical symptoms and behavioural changes. This can include

- Frequent or excessive worry
- Poor concentration
- Specific fear or phobias (e.g. fear of heights)
- Poor sleep
- Nausea or upset stomach
- Feeling irritable or emotional
- Muscle tension and restlessness
- Increased heart rate and difficulty breathing
- Avoidance or procrastination
- Social withdrawal

Significant anxiety is a symptom of many mental health disorders including: generalised anxiety

disorder, social phobia, specific phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, separation anxiety disorder, agoraphobia, post-traumatic stress disorder.

Anxiety can also be a symptom of other mental health disorders. It's important that you talk with a mental health professional so they can assist in working out the best treatment plan for you.

Signs and symptoms

While there are many types of anxiety disorders each with their own unique features, there are some common symptoms including:

- Feeling worried or afraid most of the time
- Feeling tense, irritable or agitated
- Feeling nervous or scared
- Feeling panicky or on edge
- Nausea or feeling like you are going to vomit
- Increased heart rate or breathlessness
- Sweating or sweaty palms
- Headaches or dizziness
- Pins and needles or shaking
- Difficulties concentrating

- Sleep difficulties
- Thoughts including “I can’t do this”, “I can’t focus on anything except my worries”, “I can’t handle feeling like this” or “I can’t calm down”.

Constantly feeling like this can often lead people to feeling overwhelmed and exhausted.

These are just some of the many symptoms that you might experience if you have anxiety. It is designed to be used as a guide only.

Where to seek help for anxiety?

Make an appointment with your GP who can discuss with your further about anxiety and possible treatments including a referral to see a mental health professional or sometimes medication.

Contact us:

Email: info@apawc.com.au

Phone: (02) 6699 3820

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